Import of wheat inspite of unmanageable buffer stock

3723. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether the country had to import two million tonnes of wheat within two years inspite of having an unmanageable buffer stock of 35 million tonnes of wheat;

(b) whether Government's attention in this regard has been drawn to an article published in the 'Hindustan Times', dated 24th April, 1997 captioned "wheat crisis threatens food security" and that "gross mismanagement of food can drain India's economy";

(c) if so, the reasons therefor and reaction of the Government thereto; and

(d) whether Government are in favour of appointment of any new Commission for farmers of the country by disbanding the present Agricultural Costs and Prices Commission (CACP) which has outlived its utility and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) The stock position of wheat in the Central Pool during 1995 ranged between a minimum of 87.20 lakh tonnes in April to a maximum of 192.21 lakh tonnes in July and in 1996 it ranged between a minimum of 77.69 in April tc a maximum of 141.31 lakh tonnes in July.

Considering the relevant factors like stock position of foodgrains in the Central Pool, production of foodgrains in the country, trend of procurement for Public Distribution System/other welfare scheme and open market prices, Government had decided to import upto 2 million tonnes of wheat each in 1996-97 and 1997-98, to augment availability of wheat in the country.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The article is basically on the prices of agricultural commodities and has claimed that the present pricing formula followed by the Commission on Agricultural Prices and Costs has outlived its utility. Agricultural Price Policy followed by the Government over the years has contributed significantly to agricultural development and increase in production. Minimum Support Prices are fixed by the Government in the form of a guarantee to the producers that the prices will not be allowed to fall below these minimum levels. Farmers are encouraged to adopt modern technology i.e. use of high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers, spray of pesticides, etc. Government is committed to safeguard the interest of both, the farmers and the consumers.

(d) The Government is not in favour of appointment of any new Commission for farmers of the country by disbanding the present CACP.

Import of wheat and price difference between domestic and imported wheat

3724. SHRI LAKKHIRAM AGARWAL:
DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR:
SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA:

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of wheat imported during 1996-97 and likely to be imported in the near future;

(b) the quantity which has been imported till now;

(c) the per-unit cost of this imported wheat, including transportation charges;

(d) the difference in price between imported wheat and the price which is being paid to our farmers for domestic wheat; and

(e) the reasons for wheat import?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES,

CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) Government had decided to import 2 million tonnes of wheat during 1996-97, and against this a quantity of 16.75 lakh tonnes was contracted for import by STC. Government has also decided to import an additional quantity of 2 million tonnes during 1997-98 and against this, STC has contracted a quantity of 1.00 million tonnes so far.

(b) Against the 16.75 lakh tonnes of wheat contracted for import during 1996-97, a quantity of 14.71 lakh tonnes has arrived at Indian ports upto 2.5.97.

(c) Landed cost of imported wheat would be approximately Rs. 7100 per tonnes including cost of Rs. 29/- per gunny. Cost of transportation would depend on the final destination and actual cost would be known only after total despatches of imported wheat from the ports are over.

(d) The cost of imported wheat and the Minimum Support Price fixed in India are not comparable. Excluding transport, insurance, handling charges etc, the actual prices which farmers get in, say Australia, will be around Rs. 3960/- per M.T. The Minimum Support Price for wheat in India has been fixed at Rs. 4150/- per MT and additional Rs. 600/ per MT is given as bonus to the farmers for 1997-98.

(e) The decision to import wheat has been taken to augment its availability ir the country with a view to contain the open market prices.

Resistance by Government of Punjab to release adequate quantity of wheat to Government

3725. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY:
SHRI PARAG CHALIHA:

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is resistance on the part of Punjab Government for supply of adequate quantity of wheat from Punjab by the Government for Public Distribution System in the country;

(b) whether Government are planning to import three to five million tonnes of wheat to keep the prices of wheat at marginal level; and

(c) the steps Government are taking to resolve the dispute with the Punjab Government in not allowing the Centre to get larger quantity of wheat for the Public Distribution System?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) No, Sir. However, the Government of Punjab had requested for increase in the minimum Support Price of wheat for the 1997-98 rabi marketing season by at least Rs. 100/per quintal.

(b) The State Trading Corporation has been authorised to import upto 2 million tonnes of wheat during 1997-98 to augment its availability in the country.

(c) The Central Government have announced a bonus of Rs. 60/-per quintal in addition to the MSP of Rs. 415/ per quintal for wheat procured for Central Pool during the period 17.3.97 to 10.6.97. After this announcement, no other issue for increase in the price of wheat is pending with the Central Government.

समर्थन मूल्य के आधार पर चीनी की खरीद तथा बिक्री

3726. **श्री रामजीलाल:** क्या खाद्य मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार द्वारा नियत समर्थन मूल्य के आधार पर चीनी की खरीद तथा बिक्री हुई है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो उसका राज्य-वार ब्यौरा क्या है;

(ग) क्या हरियाणा में सरकार द्वारा नियत समर्थन मूल्य के अनुसार चीनी खरीदी नहीं गई; और

(घ) यदि हां, तो इसके क्या कारण हैं?